

Middletown, NY – Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) today received notification that his efforts to expose Medicare fraud led to a major crackdown today by law enforcement agencies. In a letter sent today from the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), Hinchey was notified that his efforts have helped federal prosecutors indict more than 40 people who had illegally billed Medicare for more than \$100 million in payments. The perpetrators allegedly used stolen identities of doctors and patients, including thousands from the Orange Regional Medical Center, to file false reimbursement requests for Medicare for procedures that were not performed. A number of local constituents had brought this issue to the attention of the Congressman's office.

"I am writing to give you some good news," read the letter from the CMS official. "In the past couple of years, you have written to us on behalf of several of your constituents who reported Medicare billings and payments for services they did not receive....We are happy to report that law enforcement agents have identified the perpetrators of the crime and made multiple arrests throughout the country today."

According to a Department of Justice press release, across the country seventy-three defendants, including a number of alleged members and associates of an Armenian-American organized crime network, were charged in indictments unsealed today in five judicial districts with various health care fraud-related crimes involving more than \$163 million in fraudulent billing. According to the indictments, the defendants allegedly stole the identities of doctors and thousands of Medicare beneficiaries and operated at least 118 different phony clinics in 25 states for the purposes of submitting Medicare reimbursements.

"I've been concerned about reports of Medicare fraud for a number of years now because we simply cannot afford it and such crimes undermine this tremendously important healthcare program," said Hinchey. "Those who steal from Medicare put health care for millions of seniors at risk and need to be caught and punished for their crimes. I want to specifically recognize Carmel Wilson in my Middletown District Office for her vigilance in carrying this issue forward after multiple reports from local seniors. We will continue to work to hold accountable those who steal from and abuse the Medicare trust fund, and I encourage anyone out there who is aware of any similar type of fraudulent activity to report that activity to my office immediately."

Hinchey has long fought to preserve and strengthen Medicare. Most recently, he voted to pass legislation that extended the solvency of the Medicare trust fund for nine years. This legislation also contained provisions to reduce payment errors, waste, fraud and abuse to make Medicare

more efficient while returning those savings to the Trust Fund to strengthen Medicare for years to come. Hinchey has also worked to improve the prescription drug benefits offered through Medicare. He voted to eliminate the gap in prescription drug coverage known as the donut hole, and had been a tireless advocate for provisions which would allow CMS to negotiate drug prices – an action which would save taxpayers \$156 billion over ten years.